



**Development
Plan for the
Royal Borough of
Windsor & Maidenhead**

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**Royal Borough
of Windsor &
Maidenhead**

Planning for the Future – Key Topics



July 2026

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The aerial image of Windsor on the front cover is by Doug Harding.

Why are we asking about these topics?

The Development Plan for the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead will need to address a number of important issues that affect the future of the Royal Borough.

This document provides a brief introduction to the key topics that underpin the consultation questions, organised under five topic areas. It is intended to help explain some of the opportunities, challenges and choices the new Plan will need to consider.

Reading this document may help provide additional background and context as you complete the questionnaire.

Topic 1: Building Communities

What is this topic about?

The Royal Borough will need to plan for future housing needs while ensuring communities remain attractive, inclusive and sustainable places to live.

This is about more than simply building homes. It is about creating successful neighbourhoods, providing homes that meet different needs, supporting community facilities and ensuring new development contributes positively to the places where people live.



Why is it important?

Many people face challenges accessing suitable housing. House prices and rents remain high, making it difficult for some residents, including younger people and families, to remain in the borough.

At the same time, national planning policy requires most councils to plan for significantly higher levels of housing growth than in the past. Meeting these needs while maintaining qualities people value about the borough will be one of the most significant challenges for the new Plan.

Some of the choices and questions we face

Meeting future housing needs is unlikely to be achieved through a single option for locating new development. The new Plan will probably need to consider a range of approaches, including development within urban areas, the expansion of established communities and potentially other options such as a new settlement.

Similarly, delivering the homes people need may require balancing a number of important priorities, such as providing more genuinely affordable housing, safeguarding local character, environmental protection, and better and more timely infrastructure provision.

The purpose of this consultation is not to ask people to choose one option over all others. Instead, we want to understand which issues and priorities matter most to residents, businesses and other stakeholders when these competing considerations need to be balanced.

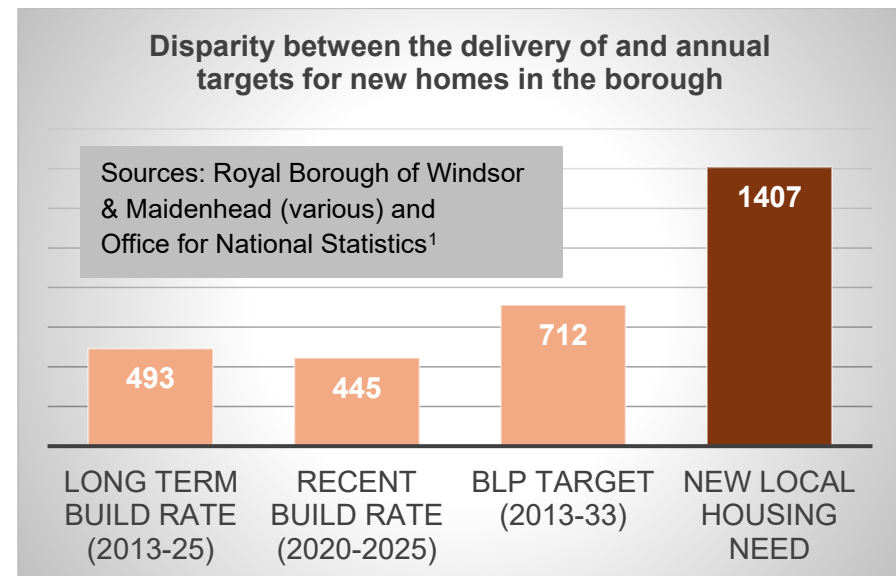
The consultation therefore asks for your views on issues such as:

- How important is Green Belt protection relative to other priorities.
- Where should future housing growth be focused?
- What makes a strong and successful community?

Facts and Figures

The new Development Plan for the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead will need to respond to a range of demographic, economic and housing challenges. The information below provides some background about housing need, affordability and population change in the Royal Borough. These statistics are intended to provide context for the consultation and help inform your responses.

Housing

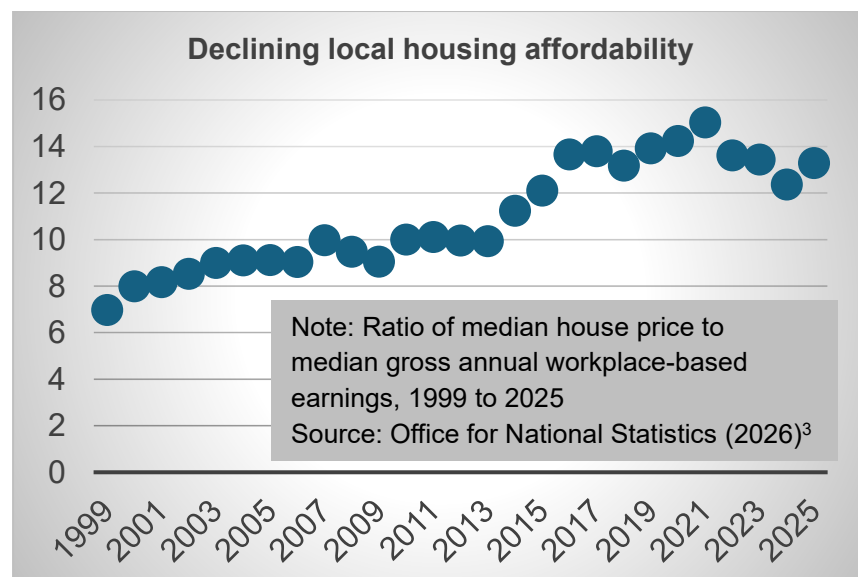


- The latest Local Housing Need figure that the plan has to aim to meet is around 1,400 new homes per year, which is nearly double that of the current annual target in the Borough Local Plan, and around three times the actual

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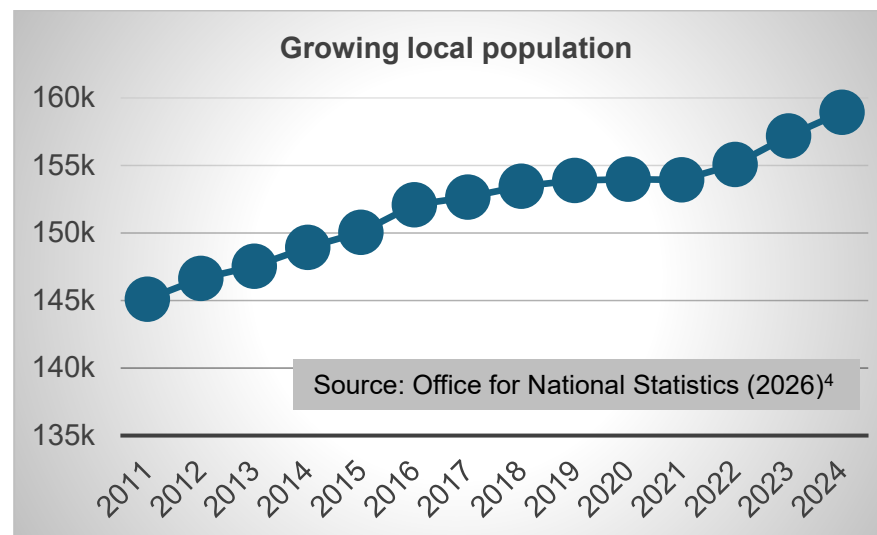
current rate at which new homes are being built in the borough.

- Over the last 5 years (2020-2025) a total of 279 affordable homes were built (56 per year on average) out of 2,227 new homes built (445 per year on average). Affordable homes were 12.5% of all the homes built.²



- There is a pattern of declining housing affordability in the borough with median housing prices now over 13 times median earnings.

Population



- There has been a 3.3% increase in the borough's population in the last 5 years.
- 18.9% of the borough's population is over 65 years of age (compared to 19.8% in the South East as a whole and 18.7% in England)⁵.
- The Royal Borough's population forecast to increase to almost 165,000 by 2047⁶.

Topic 2: Caring for What Matters

What is this topic about?

The Royal Borough contains valued countryside, parks, rivers, landscapes, heritage sites and important habitats for wildlife.

This topic considers how the new Plan for the borough can help conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment while responding to climate change and supporting healthy communities.



Why is it important?

The Royal Borough's landscapes, heritage and green spaces are among its most valued assets, making a fundamental contribution to its character, identity and quality of life.

The borough also faces increasing environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss and flood risk, which the new Plan will need to address.

Some of the choices and questions we face

The consultation asks for your views on which environmental issues should be prioritised. However, we would also welcome your views on:

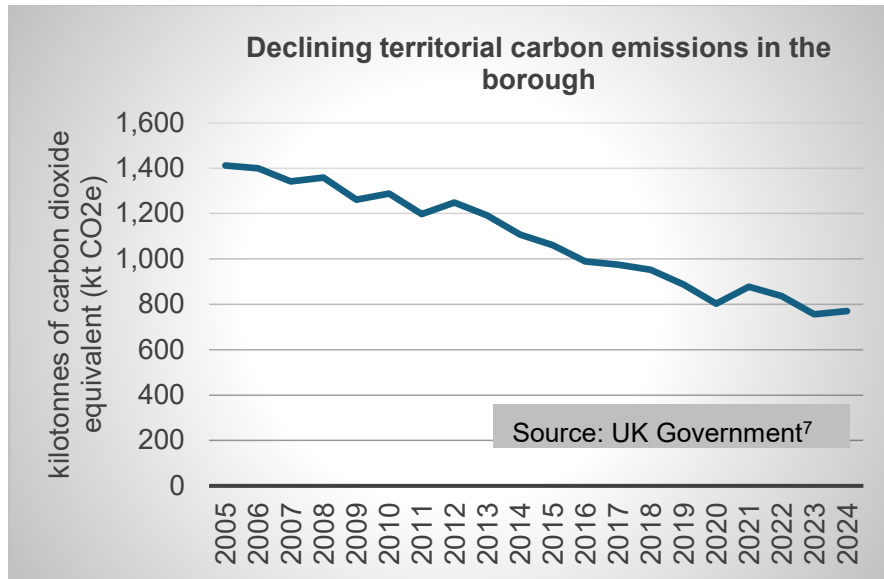
- How should we respond to climate change?
- What should be protected or enhanced?
- How can we support biodiversity and nature recovery?
- How should flood risk influence future development?

Facts and figures

The new Plan will need to respond to a range of environmental challenges and opportunities. The information below provides some background on carbon emissions, flood risk and biodiversity within the Royal Borough. These statistics are intended to provide context for the consultation and help inform your responses.



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- There has been an estimated 45.4% reduction in territorial carbon emissions in the Royal Borough between 2005 and 2024.
- 1,975 hectares or almost 10% of the borough is covered by an ecological designation, including 126 hectares as Ramsar, 1,663 hectares as SSSI and 186 hectares as Local Nature Reserve.⁹

- The Royal Borough is subject to extensive flood risk with 11.2% of properties at risk of any level of flood risk. This is expected to increase over time with climate change.⁸



Topic 3: Supporting Everyday Life

What is this topic about?

Communities rely on a wide range of infrastructure and services for everyday life. These include roads, public transport, schools, healthcare facilities, parks, leisure facilities and digital networks.

As the Royal Borough grows and changes, it is important that infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of existing and future communities. The Plan will need to consider how future growth can be supported by the infrastructure people need and where improvements may be required.

New development can also help fund infrastructure through developer contributions, including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements. These contributions can support a range of infrastructure projects and community facilities. However, there is unlikely to be sufficient funding to deliver every improvement that people might like to see. This means choices and priorities will need to be considered when deciding how available funding should be invested.



Why is it important?

Growth can place additional pressure on existing infrastructure and services.

The Plan will need to consider how development should contribute towards improvements and how investment can best support existing and future communities.

Through this consultation, we would like to understand which infrastructure improvements matter most to residents, businesses and community organisations, and where future investment should be prioritised.

Some of the choices and questions we face

The consultation asks for your views on:

- Which types of infrastructure should be prioritised when developer funding is limited?
- What improvements would make the greatest difference to people's daily lives?



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Facts and figures

- The Elizabeth line has served Maidenhead station since 2022, with the service fully operational from May 2023, connecting Maidenhead direct through to central London and beyond.



- An average of 9.5 bus trips per head of population were made in the borough in 2024/25 – significantly lower than the national average and other Berkshire authorities.¹⁰
- In 2024/25 the Council received £7.5m in Community Infrastructure Levy receipts to spend on improving infrastructure in the borough.¹¹
- Birth rates are low affecting the demand for reception and primary school places.

Topic 4: A Prosperous Local Economy

What is this topic about?

A successful economy supports employment opportunities, investment, local services and the prosperity of communities.

This topic considers how the new Plan can help support businesses, town centres, tourism and economic growth over the coming decades.



Why is it important?

A strong local economy helps support jobs, investment, community services and opportunities for residents across the borough.

The Royal Borough has a strong and diverse economy, but it faces change.

Town centres are adapting to changing shopping habits, businesses need modern and flexible premises, and competition for land can place pressure on employment sites.

The Plan can help shape how the local economy evolves and ensure that future growth benefits residents and businesses.

Some of the choices and questions we face

The consultation asks for your views on:

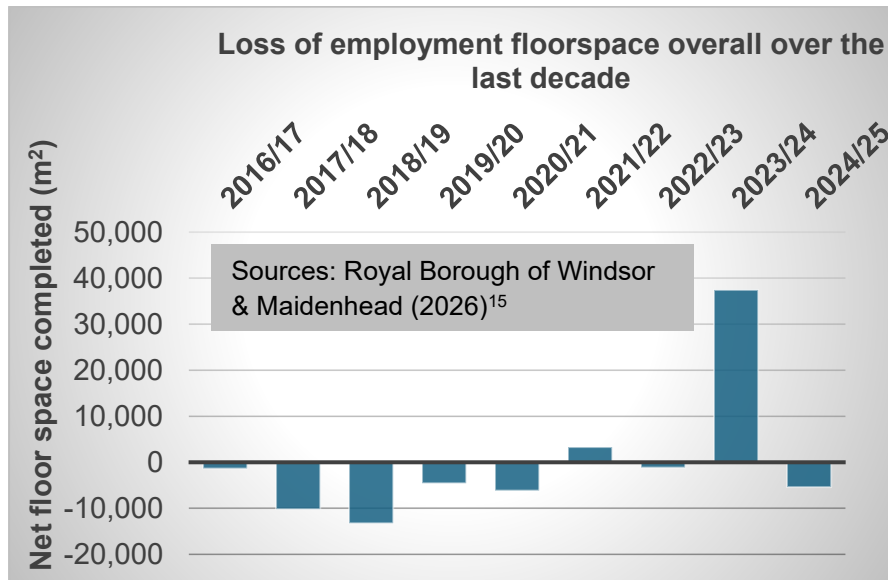
- How can we support a strong local economy?
- Where should future employment growth take place?
- What would improve your local high street or town centre?

Facts and figures

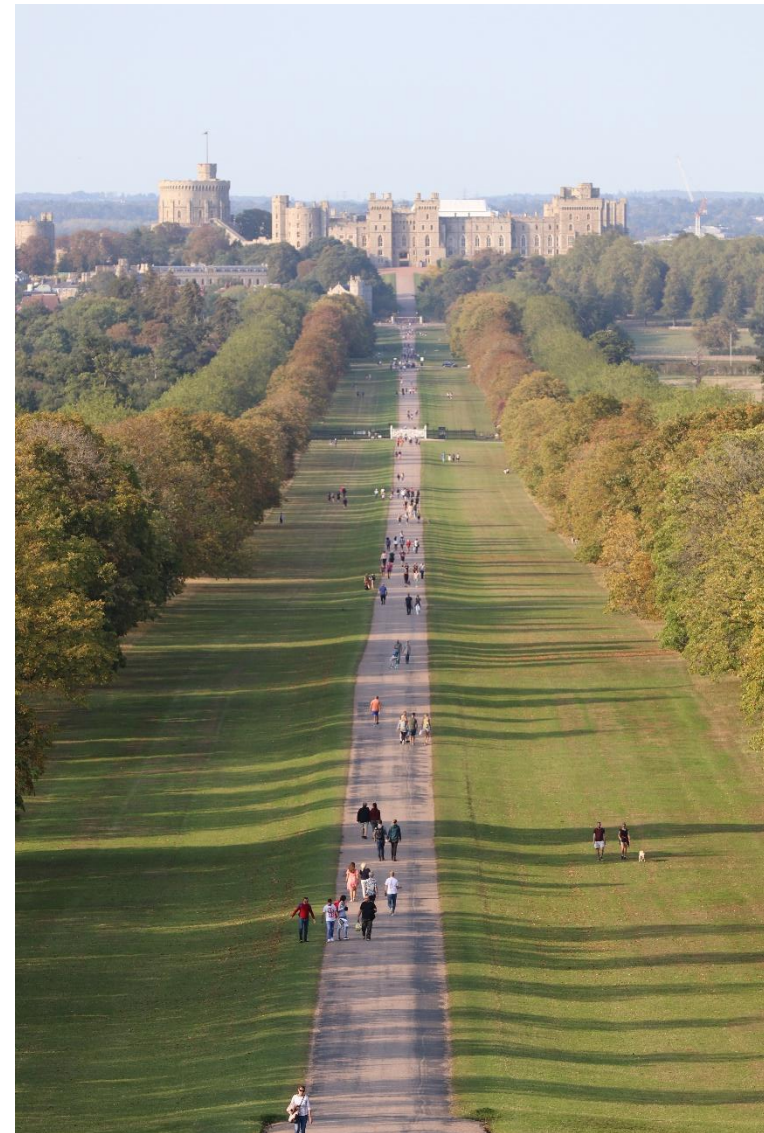
- There were 9,820 active business enterprises in the borough in 2024¹².
- The £500 million redevelopment of the Nicholson's Centre will regenerate a previously developed brownfield site in Maidenhead town centre, and provide 856 new apartments, 11,350 square metres of flexible office space, over 55 new retail and flexible commercial units, two new squares and improved pedestrian permeability through the town centre.¹⁴

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- Over the last decade, there has been a small loss of employment floorspace overall, with losses in most years and a significant net addition in 2023/24.



- The Royal Borough's visitor economy is centred on a nationally significant collection of attractions including Windsor Castle, Windsor Great Park, Ascot Racecourse, LEGOLAND Windsor Resort, Eton and the River Thames. In 2022 the borough recorded 12.73 million visitor trips, generating £585 million of direct visitor expenditure and £743 million of economic activity in total, and supporting approximately 11,430 jobs.¹³



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Cross-Cutting Topic: Planning for the Right Locations

Why does location matter?

The location of future development will influence many of the issues explored in the consultation. Decisions about where homes, jobs and infrastructure are located can affect travel patterns, access to services, environmental impacts, infrastructure requirements and the character of existing communities.



The Royal Borough contains a range of constraints and considerations, including Green Belt, flood risk areas, valued landscapes and heritage sites. The Plan will need to balance these factors when deciding where future development should and should not take place.

Some of the choices and questions we face

Meeting future development needs is unlikely to rely on a single type of location. A range of options will need to be considered, each with different advantages and disadvantages.

Through the consultation, we would like to understand how residents, businesses and other stakeholders view different approaches and which considerations they believe should carry the

greatest weight when choices need to be made about how much development is earmarked for different types of location.

The consultation asks for your views on:

- What considerations should be the top priority for the new Plan?
- Are there other issues that should be addressed?

Have Your Say

We encourage you to complete the [questionnaire](#) and share your views on the issues and priorities that should help shape the future of the Royal Borough.

Please Note:

The 'Facts and figures' in this document are for illustrative purposes and we will be developing a detailed evidence base as we prepare the Plan.

References

Endnote Source

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- 3** Office for National Statistics (26 March 2026). *House price to workplace-based earnings ratio*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/Ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>
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- 5** Office for National Statistics (ONS) (30 July 2025). *Population Estimates 2024*, Berkshire Observatory, <https://rbwm.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/>
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- 8** Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (2026). *Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2026-2041*. Available at: <https://rbwmtogether.rbwm.gov.uk/flood-risk-management-strategy>. The adjacent photo is taken from p18 of the strategy.
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website, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus-statistics-data-tables#local-bus-passenger-journeys-bus01>

- 11 Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (undated). *Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024-25*. Available at: https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-02/cil_infrastructure_funding_statement_schedule_2024-2025.pdf
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- 13 Tourism South East (2022). *The Economic Impact of Tourism on Windsor and Maidenhead Borough 2022*. Available at: [This is a hyperlink.](#)
- 14 Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead planning application number 25/01099/OUT.
- 15 Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (2026). Authority Monitoring Report 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025. Available at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/evidence-base-and-monitoring/monitoring>